Local health coordinators begin new duties

Newly-created local public health coordinator positions are being filled at local health departments throughout the state.

More than 70 local health departments have added the new positions, which are designed to plan and guide public health emergency preparedness efforts at the local level.

The new positions are funded by grants from the Indiana State Department of Health's Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response division. The money comes from a federal grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The purpose of creating the new positions was to provide staffing assistance to local health departments, which were already very busy even before the possible threat of bioterrorism created additional responsibilities and requirements.



Leah Ingraham, Bio-Terrorism contractor, left, talks with local public health coordinators Jennifer Lucas (Clay County Health Department), Gerri Husband (Clay County Health Department), and Dan Peppin (Lake County Health Department) during training in February.

"Public health professionals have only recently joined the ranks of 'first responders,' and this new role requires extensive preparation and an 'all hazards' approach to planning," said Local Emergency Preparedness Director Tanya Williams. "We are very pleased to have these new team members on board and look forward to supporting their efforts to protect the health of all Hoosiers."

After receiving initial orienta-

(See LOCAL- Page 4)

First Lady records physical fitness PSAs

Indiana First Lady Cheri Daniels recently recorded three radio public service announcements for the Governor's Council for Physical Fitness and Sports. One of the spots promotes the "Governor's Family Fitness Open House" in Indianapolis on May 7. The other two offer general advice about maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle, and encourage listeners to visit the Council's new Web site at www.fitness.in.gov. Click here to listen to the spots available on the Council's Web site.



Tuition reimbursement benefit in place

Tuition help is now available for Indiana State Department of Health employees working towards a higher education academic degree or certificate program relating to agency positions.

The program became effective in January and uses money from the Bio-Terrorism Focus Area G fund as well as ISDH Funds.

"These funds offer employees support for professional development," said Barbara Gibson, Office of Policy. "This employee benefit is all part of building and sustaining employees' knowledge and skills. The intent of the program is to maintain employee expertise within the agency."

To be considered for the tuition reimbursement benefit, employees must be full-time, must complete their initial working test period, and obtain permanent status by the end of the class for which they are requesting tuition reimbursement. Employees who have active discipline or work improvement plans in their personnel files are not eligible to apply.

Applications are available on the Intranet and must be submitted 30 days prior to the start of the course. Those employees approved to receive tuition reimbursement will receive such after the course is completed. A grade of a "C" or better must be earned, and a certificate of completion or transcript must be submitted to the Tuition Reimbursement Committee.

"It is important for those employees interested in applying for the tuition reimbursement to read the application form very carefully," said Gibson. "The employee needs to succinctly clarify how the course applies to his or her job in the agency." Gibson also pointed out that funding for the tuition reimbursement benefit is limited. The committee, she explained, will try to fund all applications that meet the criteria. "It is important that employees who would like to be considered for this benefit, submit their applications early," Gibson said.

The reimbursement is good

only for tuition, not for supplies, books, or student fees, said Gibson. She also stressed that while online courses are eligible, they must be taken on an employee's own time, not during regular work hours. Scholarships are not reimbursable.

The committee is currently reviewing applications.

One of those applications is from Bruce Farrar, Bio-Terrorism, who is working towards his master's in public health. He recently was approved for nearly 50 percent of the tuition for one class that he is currently taking.

"I applied for reimbursement to help pay for the cost of tuition for this degree," he said.

Tuition, he said, that averages \$200 per semester hour. "I remember paying \$100 in tuition for 15 credit hours in my first quarter in college," he said.

Like Farrar, employees are eligible for reimbursement up to 50 percent of the cost of tuition for a maximum of two classes per calendar year

The complete reimbursement policy is available on the Intranet.

Elementary students earn Fever clinic

Northside Elementary students were rewarded last month for their commitment to physical education.

Students at the Hartford City, Indiana, school were honored with a physical fitness clinic by the Indiana Fever due to their 100 percent participation and successful completion of the Governor's Fitness Award program.

Team assistant coaches, staff, and star player Coretta Brown discussed the importance of physical activity, said Eric Neuburger, director of the Governor's Council



for Physical Fitness and Sports.

"They explained that you can be physically active with any career, not just with sports," said Neuburger. "They also discussed how active physical fitness components can become a habit in your lifestyle instead of being viewed as a workout."

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The Indiana State Department of Health *Express* is a biweekly publication for ISDH employees and stakeholders. Words in blue are links that you can access directly if you read the *Express* online. To submit news items, call (317) 234-2817 or send information to: ISDH *Express*, Office of Public Affairs, 2 N. Meridian St., Section 6G, Indianapolis, IN 46204-3003. Inquiries should be directed to:

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Poison Center, ISDH offer poison prevention tips



The Indiana Poison Center received more than 80,000 calls for help in 2004. According to the Center, most of those poisonings occurred at home,

and 55 percent of them involved children ages 5 and under.

During National Poison Prevention week, March 20 to 26, the Indiana Poison Center and the Indiana State Department of Health's Injury Prevention Program stressed the importance of poison prevention, especially for children. Information on poisoning prevention was posted on the homepage of the Indiana State Department of Health Web site and on the site for the Injury Prevention Program.

According to Dr. James Mowry, the Indiana Poison Center's director, children under age six are particularly at risk for poisoning due to their stage of development. Dr. Mowry says that as young children's mobility increases, so does their ability to reach for a dangerous product.

"Young children constantly explore the world around them, touching and tasting everything they see," Dr. Mowry said. "Unfortunately, the results can be devastating."

Following are safety tips for individuals to follow to prevent poisonings in the home:

- Choose products and medicines with child resistant packaging whenever possible;
- Replace child-resistant caps tightly every time you give or take a medicine or use a product;
- Store medicines and products up high. Lock them out of sight and

reach of children;

- •Read the label each and every time before giving or taking a medicine or using household products – don't guess about how to use a product;
- ◆Take medicines where children can't watch they learn by imitating;
- Put the number for the Indiana Poison Center, 1-800-222-1222, on or near every telephone;
- Make sure babysitters and family members caring for your children also have the emergency number posted in their homes;
 and
- ◆Call 1-800-222-1222 even if you only think that someone has been poisoned. Don't wait to see if the person gets sick. Call the experts at the Poison Center right

(See POISON- Page 4)

Personal safety tips offered to ISDH employees

Sergeant Bill Reckert with the Indiana State Police (shown right) presented "Personal Safety Awareness" March 21 to Indiana State Department of Health employees.

The program, presented by the Safety Education and Training Committee, focused on recognizing the potential for violence in and outside the workplace for employees.

Sgt. Reckert discussed the use of chemical agents such as mace and pepper spray, as well as how to tell if someone is carrying a weapon.



Photo by Daniel



Public health week activities planned

During National Public Health Week, April 4 to 8, the Indiana University School of Medicine Department of Public Health and the Indiana Mid-American Public Health Training Center are sponsoring a series of luncheon seminars and educational events that will focus on empowering Hoosiers to live stronger, longer by promoting the three Ps: Prevent problems from happening, Protect your health through early detection, and Plan to stay healthy. Lunch and refreshments will be provided and seating is limited. For information and to register, visit www. maphtc.iupui.edu or www.pbhealth.iupui.edu.

Local.

(Continued from page 1)

tion training at the Indiana State
Department of Health, the local
public health coordinators head
back to their home counties to get
to work. Their duties include creating plans for mass prophylaxis
clinics in the event of a large-scale
public health emergency.

They also coordinate with other emergency response agencies in their counties and districts, and work with the State Department of Health on other preparedness related initiatives.

Poison_

(Continued from page 3)

The Indiana Poison Center warns that the most dangerous poisonings involve common household items, like medicines, cleaning products, automotive products, hydrocarbons (gasoline, kerosene, lighter fluid, furniture polish, hair and body oils), and pesticides.

The Indiana Poison Center is both an emergency telephone service and an information resource center, with services accessible to the general public and health care professionals 24 hours per day, year-round.

It is a collaborative effort of the Indiana State Department of Health, Clarian Health Partners, the Federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, and health care providers throughout the state.

Fever_

(Continued from page 2)

The fitness award program, sponsored by Neuburger's office at the ISDH, encourages schools to design a fitness program that incorporates strength, endurance, and flexibility.

The nine-week program is monitored by an adult and can include fitness in various mediums like homework and in the classroom, not just during physical education class.

The clinic also included fitness activities like games and relays as well as audience participation with the players.

"The students were really excited and were all smiles," said Neuburger of the Northside students. "(The clinic) was the buzz around town."

During the 2004 to 2005 school year, 16,000 students participated in the Governor's Fitness award program at 60 schools statewide, an increase from last year. One school north of and one school south of Interstate 70 that have the highest participation and completion of the program are awarded a clinic.

Irvington Community School in Indianapolis will also receive a Fever clinic this school year.



Fever basketball player Coretta Brown

l Axler